

## Adapted by Washington WIC Connects – ENERGIZER 8: Points of Acceptance and Affirmations



- *Consider this Energizer as a Nutrition Education In-service.*
- *Monthly nutrition in-services for para-professional CPAs require face-to-face contact. Please see the Policy and Procedure manual Volume 2, Chapter 14: Staffing for more information.*
- *Count time spent on this as Nutrition Education in the time study.*
- *If you are an individual or you have a small group: read this Energizer, work individually or in pairs.*

**Time:** 20 - 30 minutes

**Objective:** Build skills and awareness about the Power of Influence principles and WIC Connects. By using these tools, staff can influence behavior change and create environments supporting clients to become their best selves.

### Instructions:

Begin by **sharing** the following:

*A. Warm Up – (optional) Ice Breaker.*

- *Encouragement Game*
- *Materials needed – pens and paper for each person*

Allow 7 minutes.

*B. Content – Hear and participate in activities including:*

- 1. Points of Acceptance*
- 2. Focus in on Affirmations*

Allow 15 minutes.

*C. Closing - debrief and **close** our time together.*

Allow 3 minutes.

### **Ice Breaker:** Encouragement Game (p. 1)

Sit in a circle and give everyone a piece of paper and pen. Each person should write their name at the top of the piece of paper, and then pass it to the person on their left. Each person then writes one positive characteristics about the person whose name is at the top of the paper.

After 15-20 seconds, everyone passes the pieces of paper around to their left again. This continues until everyone has written on everyone else's paper.

The paper will now be with the person whose name is at the top. Depending on the size and makeup of the group, consider asking people read their list aloud to the group.

### **Introduction:**

The icebreaker gave us a chance to think about all the positive things that others see in us and it reminds us of our strengths.

I'm excited to share another Energizer – to learn more about each other and explore our topic together. This topic was chosen because of what a WIC staff person shared about using Affirmations.

Who would like to read the section “Why Affirm?” on page 1?

### **Why Affirm? (p. 1)**

*I always thought of myself as someone who gave a lot of positive feedback to people in the clinic and also to my family. I noticed that I'm more likely to give compliments like – hey, great work- or good job or you look nice today. I really have a tough time affirming the good choices someone makes.*

*I think I do better with affirmations at home. I always try to be specific with my kids so they feel good about their chores. My son Steven- he's become the best ever at putting his plate in the dishwasher. I say things like “Steven- you are the best at dishes - you even help your little sister. You are my best dishwasher-loading guy.” It really works. Steven never forgets his dishes.*

*If it works at home, how can I use this with clients?*

Thank you, reader! This story illustrates, affirmations really work!

## **How Do We Affirm? (p. 1)**

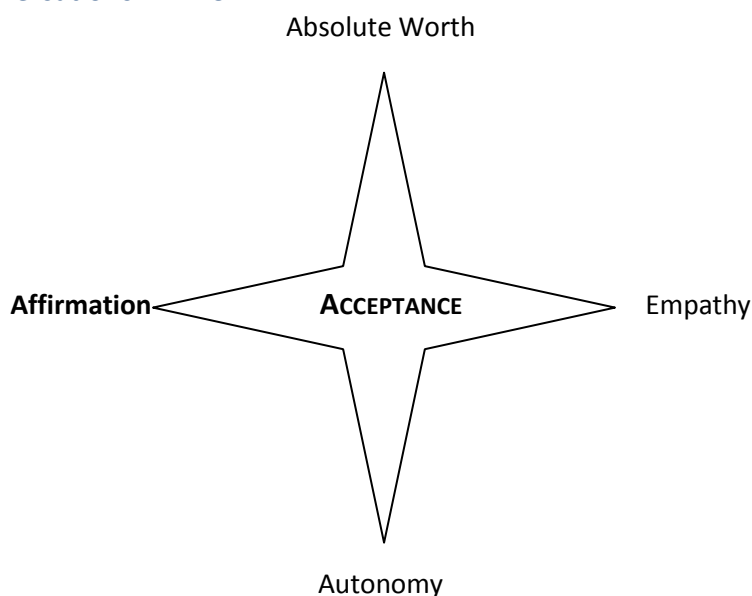
When we are specific about what others are doing right, and affirm them for what's positive in their lives, we show our confidence that they can make changes which builds their confidence to do it. Affirmations are about keeping a mind-set where we are always looking for AND finding what is right rather than what is wrong.

## **What are Affirmations? (p. 2)**

You'll find a description of Affirmations at the top of page 2. Affirmations are what we say about what others are doing that point in the direction of positive change, no matter how big or small. They build confidence in our ability to change. They are about noticing and speaking about anything specific (See It, Say It) even just ideas or plans to make a change. Believe it or not, it even matters when we notice and applaud others' attempts that fail! This could look like: "You said your family didn't really like the spinach you brought home but you're ready to try it cooked the next time. You really want to make this happen for your family!" Anything we say to acknowledge others and their efforts makes a difference!

For affirmations to stick, we have to accept others and their situations without judgment - as if the other person is sharing a gift with you. Truly, it is a gift: they're offering the gift of themselves. When offered a gift, even if it's not quite right for you, you accept it graciously and with gratitude. If you're a parent, you know how it is to accept something without trying to change it. That macaroni necklace or picture they just drew of you with your nose in the center of your forehead – you receive it as is and don't try to fix it or make it better. It is what it is.

We show our acceptance by saying words of affirmation. They are acceptance in action! Today we are going to hear about the four points of acceptance – they are like the four points of this star. We will talk about each point and how it adds to genuine acceptance then focus in more detail on one point of this star: Affirmation. As you listen to them, think about how these fit in with your conversations in WIC.



We'll start with **Absolute Worth**. Who would like to read from the shaded box on page 3?  
(**Leader:** decide if one person reads the entire box; or if you ask for 4 volunteers to read.)

**1. Absolute Worth**

**Honor the worth and potential of each and every person**

- See every person as born with worth and potential.
- Opposite of judgment, which places conditions on value.

**2. Empathy**

**Seek always to understand another's perspective**

- Show active interest and effort to understand another's perspective because they are worth knowing – seeing the world through their eyes.
- Empathy communicates, “what you say matters and I respect you and want to understand you”.
- Opposite is to impose our own ideas and perspectives as right and assume other's thinking is irrelevant, misguided, or wrong.

**3. Autonomy**

**Recognize and support each person's ability to choose their own way**

- Every person has the right and the ability to choose their own attitudes and actions.
- When we acknowledge another person's freedom of choice, they are less defensive and more likely to change
- We must let go of the idea or burden that we have to (or even can) make people change – let go of the power to change others because it is a power you never had in the first place.
- The opposite is trying to **MAKE** people do things – to convince and control them.

**4. Affirmation**

**Notice the person's strengths and efforts. See it, Say it.**

- Seek to acknowledge another person's strengths and efforts
- Give words of acknowledgement to any effort you see. If you see it, say the words of affirmation.

When hearing about the points of acceptance, what stands out as something that will help in your work with clients?

Affirmations are about letting go of judgments and accepting others as they are. Simply looking for and finding what is right. We are all a mix of struggle and strength. The key is to open our eyes and hearts to see only the strengths and then say them.

Look at the list of strengths on page 4. We all share these strengths. What are other strengths that you see in clients that we can add to our list?

It turns out that affirmations are something we don't do much. It's the least used OARS skill but it's the one with the greatest potential to build confidence and cause change. Since it's sometimes hard to find the words to say or see how affirmations fit, we have a couple of pieces of some real client conversations to share. These are from appointments a Connector had with 2 different clients – one postpartum and one pregnant. The appointments were recorded and the conversations were written down. These conversations begin on page 5.

Who will volunteer to be the WIC staff and who will be clients? **Listen** for both client strengths and affirmations – they should look different from information or advice giving. You'll also hear efforts affirmed even when they're not "perfect". Going back to page 1- it's about what the client is doing right and building confidence.

### **Conversation 1**

Staff: Can you tell me a little about how your pregnancy is going?

Client: It's going good. I'm just excited she's coming. I'm a little overdue.

Staff: How's your diet been going?

Client: I try to eat well. The fruit and vegetable checks we get are awesome. I wish we could get more.

Staff: That's great! Oh good! High five on that one! You like those fruit and veggies! That's awesome!

Client: I try to find foods that are good for me and also helpful for baby.

Staff: You are such a good mom – you're setting such a great example for your little one.

Thank you Conversation 1 actors. You may have noticed that the strengths aren't necessarily named in the way they are on our list. It's possible that we heard different strengths. There's not a right answer here. Which client strengths did you notice? Hear a sample. What affirmations did you hear? Hear a sample.

Who will be our volunteers for the next pair? Remember to listen for affirmations and client strengths.

### **Conversation 2**

Client: I just get up and go to school then go to work. Only I'm trying to get on a diet-diet because I gained some weight when I was pregnant before.

Staff: It's a challenge for you right now with your busy schedule. Where would you like to see yourself with your diet?

Client: I'd like to see myself pack more food for myself so I have meals and snacks throughout the day so that way I don't have to eat fast food all day.

Staff: What I'm hearing you say is that you're looking for quick, easy, grab-and-go foods. Would you like me to share what's worked for some women?

Client: I've thought about getting some paper bags like lunch bags or whatever and maybe trying on my days off to like pack throughout the week and just have like Monday, Tuesday. .on them.

Staff: That's where it all starts. If anything you're just thinking about it right now but that's progress so that's awesome.

Client: I have been slowing down on it. I still eat bad but I'm slowly trying to wean myself off. Like instead of dousing my salad with ranch, I put on just one thing of it just to add the flavor.

Staff: You're a busy woman. You're working. You're going to school.

Client: I used to be a competitive swimmer. I never had to watch what I ate.

Staff: We hope you feel heard when you come here and supported. You have a lot of answers inside you. You really do and I love how you understand yourself best. It's like you're approaching this slowly and working on what you can handle right now in your life. You're a busy woman. You're working. You've got a little one. I commend you for that. I think you're doing great. Keep up the good work!

Thanks Team 2! Which client strengths did you hear? Hear a sample. What affirmations? Hear a sample. **Leader:** Refer to the list of client strengths on page 4 of the Participant Copy.

Who would like to read this list of **Some Affirmations for WIC** (page 6)?

### Some Affirmations for WIC

- You're son is so lucky to have a mom who cares so much.
- You can be very persistent when you set your mind to something.
- Keep it up. You are doing great.
- You want the best for your daughter.
- You really have some good ideas for how to do this.
- You are. . . (strength)
- You feel. . . (strength)
- You believe. . . (strength)

These are some examples of words of affirmation that you can use with clients. The most important thing is to put judgment aside and acknowledge the strengths of others.

### **Affirmations Practice**

In a team of 3 or 4, find an affirmation to offer each of the following clients. Be careful not to give any information or advice. Instead, focus on their strengths and what they're doing right.

Choose 3 to do with your team. Look at the "Some Affirmations for WIC" for ideas.

I'll call the group back together in a few minutes and we'll hear a sample of your conversations.

Conversation	Affirmation	Strength
<p>First time pregnant woman who's decided to breastfeed.</p> <p><i>"I know it's best for baby. Even though my friends say it hurts, I think I can at least try."</i></p>		
<p>16 month old using bottle at bedtime.</p> <p><i>"The doctor said he should be off the bottle. It's just so hard to hear him cry."</i></p>		
<p>Pregnant woman who smokes ½ pack a day.</p> <p><i>"It's less than I smoked last time. Life's just too stressful to quit."</i></p>		
<p>6 month old starting solids.</p> <p><i>"We've started with infant cereal and meats. She's doing really well with it."</i></p>		
<p>Restless 2 year old in waiting room.</p> <p>Client sits in the waiting room a few minutes and starts to get restless. Mom pulls out a book and begins to read to daughter. You call her name to come up for checks.</p>		
<p>Pregnant mom with 3 month old twins.</p> <p>Client misses appointment for the second time. She calls and says "I'm out of formula. I need to reschedule my appointment. "</p>		



Who will share their affirmations?

### **Affirmations Practice for Mastery (optional)**

Pair up with a friend. Take turns sharing your experience with a change that you'd like to make then listening with affirmations. Use some from above or find your own words. Start by saying:

Tell me about a change that you'd like to make. I'll call the group together and we'll hear a little about what you noticed when giving and receiving affirmations.

### **Close Session**

Affirmations help others to see what's possible and that they're able to do things differently. Thank you for your time today. I appreciate hearing from you. I'm grateful for the privilege to hear your stories.

### **Bibliography**

Rollnick, W. R. (2013). *Motivational Interviewing: Helping People Change*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Slack, K. (2011, January 11). *On Change and Compassion*. Retrieved from MI Training Today: Cultivating New Skills for a Better Tomorrow: <http://mitrainingtoday.com/motivational-interviewing-blog/2011/01/11/on-change-and-compassion/>

Rosengren, D. B. (2009). *Building Motivational Interviewing Skills: A Practitioner Workbook*. (pp. 79-80). New York: The Guilford Press.

## Icebreaker: Encouragement Game



We really like you!

## Why Affirm?

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*If it works at home, how can I use this with clients?*

## How Do We Affirm?

Affirmations are what we say about what others are doing that point in the direction of positive change, no matter how big or small.

They build confidence in our ability to change.



Affirmations really work!

## What are Affirmations?



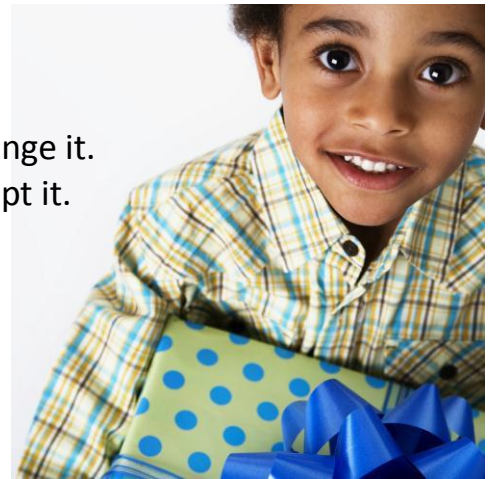
*Affirm anything that points in the direction of positive change – no matter how **BIG** or small. Notice and applaud the effort – even attempts that fail!*

## Affirmations are Acceptance in Action

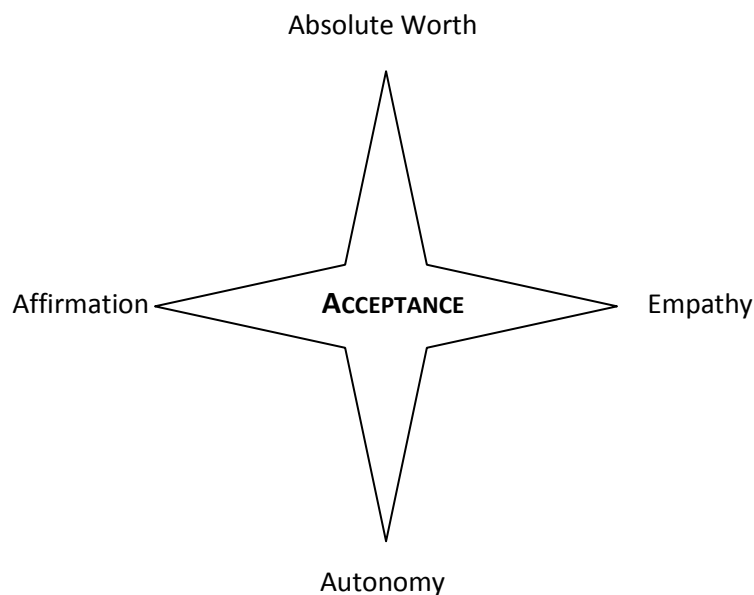
Acceptance:

Receiving what is offered without trying to change it.

We don't have to love or even like it, only accept it.



## Four Points of Acceptance



### **1. Absolute Worth**

#### **Honor the worth and potential of each and every person**

- See every person as born with worth and potential.
- Opposite of judgment which places conditions on value.

### **2. Empathy**

#### **Seek always to understand another's perspective**

- Show active interest and effort to understand another's perspective because they are worth knowing – seeing the world through their eyes.
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The key is to open our hearts and eyes to see only the strengths and say them.



*A flower cannot be forced to bloom.  
It opens in its way in its time.  
With support, people grow in a  
positive direction.*

## List of Strengths

Strengths of **Wisdom and Knowledge**: strengths about thinking and learning

*Creative*

*Curious*

*Open-minded*

*Love learning*

*Wise*

Strengths of **Courage**: strengths to accomplish goals in the face obstacles

*Brave Persistent*

*Authentic/honest*

*Enthusiastic/energetic*

Strengths of **Humanity**: strengths to care for others

*Loving*

*Kind (generous, nurturing, caring, compassionate, "nice")*

*Thoughtful*

Strengths of **Justice**: strengths for building healthy community life

*Loyal*

*Fair*

*Leader*

*Example/Role Model*

Strengths of **Self-control**: strengths against excess

*Forgiving*

*Humble*

*Careful*

*Disciplined*

Strengths of **Purpose** strengths for connecting and providing meaning

*Explorative*

*Grateful*

*Hopeful*

*Funny*

*Spiritual*

**Sample WIC conversations: What strengths and affirmations do you hear?**

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## **Affirmations Practice for Mastery (optional)**

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Tell me about a change that you'd like to make. I'll call the group together and we'll hear a little about what you noticed when giving and receiving affirmations.

## **Thanks for participating!**

*Affirm always! Remember, it's a mindset. Look for and find the good!*

## **Bibliography**

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